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GET OUT OF YOUR OFFICE! {page 14}

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Where's the LOVE?

- Despite best efforts, July Fourth here still flies under national radar
- Two travel sites found Philly hotel stays haven't kept pace with other cities for midsummer holiday vacations {page 02}

▶ Center City's fireworks show is well-known regionally, but new data and subjective rankings suggest our holiday celebration isn't a coveted destination.

News

Support for Obamacare gets healthier

- After Supreme Court ruling, voter backing rises 5 percent
- Independents, some Republicans swayed {page 05}

Katie's savvy divorce strategy

Is Holmes filing for divorce as a NYC resident to keep Suri from Scientology? {page 07}

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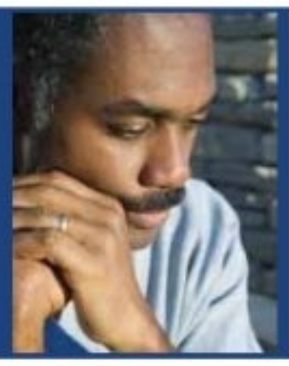

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Big bang locally, but dud attracting out-of-towners

- July Fourth is still a great time in Philly, but it doesn't register nationally
- Other cities and beaches are more popular to travelers these days

METRO FILE PHOTOS

▶ Fireworks serve as the celebration's finale.

▶ Nearly 500,000 come for the Welcome America! events each year, officials say.

Philadelphia's highly touted Wawa Welcome America! festival features 10 days of events culminating July 4 with what organizers call the nation's largest free concert, expected to draw 500,000 people this year. The event's magnitude is fitting to celebrate the Declaration of Independence in the city where it was signed.

But the festivities' noticeable absence from several 2012 best-of lists, including two ranking destinations based on hotel rooms booked through discount websites Hotwire and Priceline — the latter in which Philly didn't even crack the top 50 — have many asking: Where is the love?

"Philadelphia throws a great party for both July Fourth and New Year's Eve crowds in the city," said Cara Schneider of Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation. "One thing this year is that the holiday falls in the middle of the week. People are less likely to stay in town when they can't make a three-day weekend out of it."

Schneider said that, based on current estimates, Philly's 10,000 hotel rooms are anywhere from 50 to 100 percent booked near the Fourth, maxing out the Fridays before and after, in part due to two conventions coming to town.

"It's harder to plan around floating holidays — holidays that don't fall on the same day every year," she said, adding that many people don't make reservations ahead of time, but may still decide to stay over.

Schneider also cited the city's status as a "drive-to destination."

Schneider further pointed to a 2006 survey of July Fourth visitors showing that 49 percent were residents of the five-county region, further supporting her contention that event attendance is robust, even if stay-over rates aren't always.

"People from the suburbs, Chester County and other places nearby tend to come to Center City, it's where they want to be," she said. "They come to the mothership for the holiday."

ALEX WIGGLESWORTH
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50%
Center City hotel rooms occupied last year, when July Fourth fell on a Monday

69%
Hotel rooms occupied in 2010, when the Fourth fell on a Sunday

96%
Hotel rooms occupied in 2009, when the holiday fell on a Saturday

Some snubs

Philly suffered several high-profile snubs on lists ranking the top cities to ring in the holiday, failing to make:

- "Can't Miss Independence Day Celebrations in the National Parks," compiled by the National Park Foundation. (Valley Forge is listed.)
- "8 Quintessentially American Independence Festivities" on Huffington Post Travel.
- "Top 10 Best July 4th Fireworks Displays" on Forbes' website – though they did throw the city an "honorable mention."
- "Top 10 Destinations for the Independence Day Week" on Hotwire.
- "Top 50 Fourth of July Destinations" on Priceline — even Newark, N.J. ranks on this list.
- "Best July 4th Fireworks" on Travel + Leisure's website – though Philly isn't completely excluded, the city rates an astonishingly mediocre five out of 10.

Quoted

"To be clear, the e-mails in question did not originate with Joe Paterno or go to him, as he never personally utilized e-mail."

WICK SOLLERS, A PATERNO FAMILY ATTORNEY IN A NEW YORK TIMES REPORT YESTERDAY ON PENN STATE OFFICIALS' COMMUNICATION ABOUT JERRY SANDUSKY IN 2001

In the news

Excessive heat

The city of Philadelphia issued a "code red" excessive heat advisory on Friday that continues through this evening. The warning states that, with the heat index in the upper 90s, everyone may be susceptible to heat-related health issues. Children, senior citizens, pregnant women and those with respiratory illnesses or heart disease are especially advised to limit their exposure to the scorching temperatures.

METRO

▶ Hite

Hite chosen by SRC

PHILADELPHIA. The School Reform Commission chose William Hite Jr. to become the first permanent district superintendent since Arlene Ackerman left last year.

Hite Jr., the current superintendent of Prince George's County, Md., schools, was one of two finalists for the top job in Philadelphia.

"He has led Prince George's County schools with vision and innovation under financial challenges that might have broken a weaker superintendent," Prince George's County school board said in a statement. METRO

Pa. woman gored to death by deer

PENNSYLVANIA. A York County woman was gored to death by a deer Friday evening, according to a local television news report.

The victim reportedly ran into a deer pen located on her family's property about 25 miles south of Harrisburg after her dog somehow made its way inside.

METRO/AW

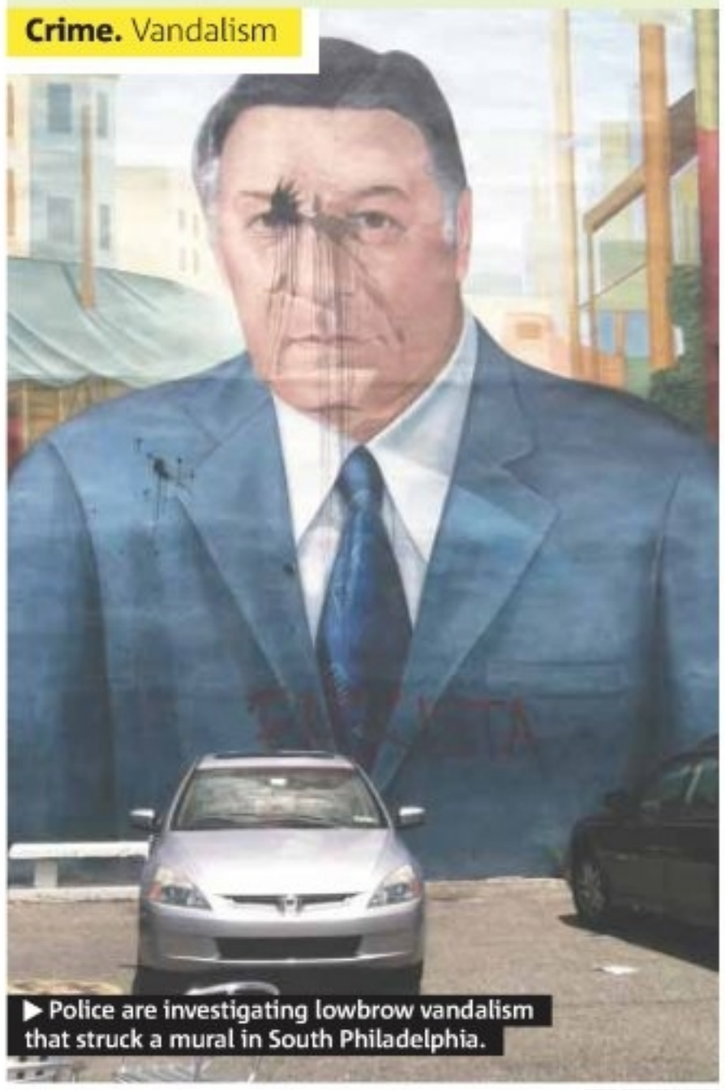
Missing boy found dead in pool

TIOGA. The body of a 7-year-old Tioga boy, reported missing Friday, was found at the bottom of a murky swimming pool, police said.

Northwest Detectives are investigating, a police spokeswoman said yesterday, but no foul play is suspected. No charges were filed over the weekend.

METRO/AW

Crime. Vandalism



▶ Police are investigating lowbrow vandalism that struck a mural in South Philadelphia.

MIKE GREGER/METRO

Rizzo labeled a 'fascista'

One of the city's most famous pieces of outdoor artwork, the three-story painting of former Mayor Frank Rizzo, was damaged by vandalism sometime over the weekend. What looked like a splat of black paint on Rizzo's head and the word "fascista" in red paint below the portrait was discovered Saturday into Sunday, police said. METRO

As July Fourth rally nears, Occupy tussles with police

- Members from other cities expected to descend on Philly
- Impromptu new camp outside Independence Hall failed Saturday

Occupy's first national gathering, in Philadelphia this week for July Fourth, saw its first moment of tension Saturday night as some protesters in an Old City park tried to temporarily resurrect an encampment similar to those that dotted the country last summer.

That led to a short-lived scuffle with police and National Park Service rangers that forced demonstrators to relocate. A release issued yesterday by the movement's National Gathering Team condemned the "disproportionate law enforcement response," but police characterized Occupiers as the agitators, arresting one man for allegedly assaulting a federal officer.

The group reemerged yesterday at Franklin Square, a family-oriented park housing a merry-go-round and miniature golf course, where participants listened to lectures and discussed possible themes for this week's five-day assembly. Though the move brought the group off federal land, it landed them squarely across the street from Philadelphia police headquarters at Seventh and Race streets. Saturday's tussle was the first of what could be more confrontations this week. Protesters plan to hold more demonstrations.

"Those federal parks were reserved, literally, for the people. The idea is that 300 people is a permit."
AARON TROISI

Walking alongside student debt awareness group All in the Red, protesters toting red balloons and banners banged pots and pans while railing against the doubling of interest rates on Stafford student loans that went into effect yesterday.

ALEX WIGGLESWORTH
awigglesworth@metro.us

KEVIN COOK/METRO

▶ A woman marched with Occupy and All in the Red yesterday.

Occupy, City Council not so different

Though protesters and city officials seemed at odds on Saturday, both sides share similar messages at times.

Before the police conflict, protesters marched against corporate personhood, an issue that has intensified since the Supreme Court's "Citizens United" ruling in 2010.

Two weeks ago, Philadelphia's City Council passed a resolution urging Congress to overturn the court's ruling and assert that only human beings, not corporations, have Constitutional rights.

METRO/AW

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11am–2pm

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No market on July 4

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every Thursday
5:30–6:30pm

BEER GARDEN
Thursday, July 12
4–8pm
Friday, July 13
Noon–8pm
Saturday, July 14
Noon–5pm

GIVE AND TAKE JUGGLERS
Wednesday
July 11 & July 25
11am–2pm

GIVE AND TAKE'S LITTLE CIRCUS
Thursday, July 12
4–6pm

FREE MINI GOLF
Every day in July
10am–8pm

PERSEVERANCE JAZZ BAND
Monday, July 16
4–6pm

ZUMBA
WITH DREXEL FITNESS
Wednesday, July 18
5:30–6:30pm

FREE EVENTS

China: New space star

Chinese astronauts have groundbreaking stay on the country's new space station ◗ Their mission is latest installment in China's ambitious and emerging space program ◗ And it's not all in the name of science

GETTY IMAGES

▶ The Chinese space shuttle blasts off for the Heavenly Palace.

Last weekend three astronauts, including one woman, blasted off to China's new space station, rather immodestly called the Heavenly Palace. And China has even grander plans for outer space.

"Space is a top priority for China," said Professor Walter Peeters, President of the International Space University. "But it doesn't have access to U.S. space technology, so it's developing all the technology on its own. In 2020, China will have the most autonomous space station in the world."

The current mission, Shenzhou 9, is China's first manned space mission docking with the Heavenly Palace (Tiangong in Chinese). Though Tiangong is much smaller than the International Space Station, China is the only country in the world that has its own space station.

"This is techno-nationalism," said Jill Stuart, lecturer in Space Politics at the London School of Economics. "Pride and glory plays a role in every country's space program, but especially so in China's."

But China's space lust also has pragmatic reasons. "I once asked a Chinese friend, 'Why are you putting so much money into space?'" Peeters said.

"Pride and glory plays a role in every country's space program." JILL STUART

"He answered, 'Because we want to sell cars.'"

Indeed, Chinese industry stands to benefit greatly from the country's space exploration. "One can use frontier technologies from space exploration in commercial sectors," according to Professor Lan Xue, dean of the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University in Beijing. "If a company had to do that kind of research on its own, it would be extremely expensive."

In other words, China wants its space program to do for its industry what NASA's memory foam did for US airlines. "But why doesn't China skip the space station and go directly to Mars, or mine resources on the moon?" Stuart said. "Having Chinese astronauts on the moon would really shake the Americans up, especially since they don't have a space shuttle anymore."

ELISABETH BRAW
METRO WORLD NEWS IN LONDON

60 seconds with ...

Locusts, mines, waves and terrorists

Adam Baker, lecturer in space engineering, Kingston University

With China in space, is this a new space race?
There's booming activity in space, but it's not like the '60s, when countries competed to put a man on the moon for prestige reasons. Now countries are using space for practical reasons. Governments and companies now have satellites in space that monitor everything from weather patterns that could affect crops [and] freak waves that could damage ships to terrorists trying blow up oil pipelines. Mining companies, for example, use space to find new metals deposits.

Which countries are active in space now that the U.S. and Russia are scaling back?
India is very active. It focuses on monitoring crops, which is driven by the need to feed its population. And many developing countries, for example in Africa, do the same. Algeria just ordered three satellites from Britain. It will use them to monitor crops and locust patterns.

Using space to monitor crops, feed growing population

Competition has always been a key factor in space exploration.

But now countries are launching space programs not to put a man on the moon — but to improve their economies.

"Space isn't a priority for Russia anymore, but India and Brazil are investing heavily in space research," Walter Peeters of the International Space University said. "India does it because it needs water and food. It's developing a whole infrastructure based in space for its booming population."

Indeed, India uses satellites to track their crops to see when they're ready for harvest: much cheaper than maintaining a huge staff on the ground.

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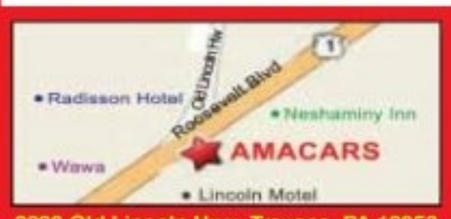

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Support for Obamacare rises after Supreme Court blessing

Voter support for President Barack Obama's health care overhaul has increased following the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling upholding it, a Reuters/Ipsos poll released yesterday showed.

Among all registered voters, support for the law rose to 48 percent in the online survey conducted after Thursday's ruling, up from 43 percent before the court decision.

The survey showed increased backing from Republicans and, crucially, the political independents whose support will be essential to winning the Nov. 6 presidential election.

Thirty-eight percent of independents supported the healthcare overhaul. That was up from 27 percent from a Reuters/Ipsos poll taken days before the justices' ruling.

"This is a win for Obama. This is his bill. There's not really any doubt in people's minds, that it belongs to him," said Julia Clark, vice president at Ipsos Public Affairs. "It's his baby. It's literally been labeled Obamacare. ... Maybe it works in his favor now that there's a little bit of a victory dance going on."

Republican opposition to the law stayed strong, if somewhat weaker than before the high court ruled. Eighty-one percent of Republicans opposed it in the most recent survey, down from 86 percent in the poll conducted June 19-23.

REUTERS

38%
Thirty-eight percent of independents supported the healthcare overhaul.

After ruling, will states be ready to act?

Policy experts question whether enough U.S. states will be ready to implement the health care law when it takes full effect in 2014.

Up to now, most states have avoided decisive action to build the private insurance exchanges that would extend health coverage to an additional 16 million Americans. Governors in largely Republican states who oppose the entire law may still refuse to act on the exchanges, requiring the federal government to step in to operate them.

REUTERS

LUKE SHARRETT-POOL/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Health care reform is being called a "win" for Obama.

Dish drops 'Mad Men' for 'Bikini Barbershop'

NEW YORK. Dish Network Corp., following through on a threat to remove AMC Networks Inc.'s channels, replaced "Mad Men," "The Walking Dead" and other AMC programs with movies and shows from HDNet.

AMC, IFC and WE tv were dropped from Dish, the second-largest U.S. satellite-TV provider, AMC Networks said in a statement.

Dish said last week it would replace AMC with commercial-free movies from HDNet. HDNet's main channel, with shows such as "Bikini Barbershop" and "Drinking Made Easy," will stand in for IFC, the Independent Film Channel. The Style channel will replace WE tv, a network aimed at women. BLOOMBERG

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Japan restarts first reactor since crisis

TOKYO. Kansai Electric Power Co. yesterday restarted the 1,180-megawatt No. 3 unit at its Ohi atomic plant, the utility said, Japan's first nuclear reactor to come back online since the Fukushima crisis, despite public safety concerns.

The government on June 16 approved the restart of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Ohi plant to avert a potential summer power crunch, sparking street protests around Japan.

The No.4 unit will resume operations later this month.

Opinion polls have shown around 70 percent of Japanese voters want to ditch nuclear power in the long term. **REUTERS**

US praises EU embargo of Iranian oil, presses Tehran

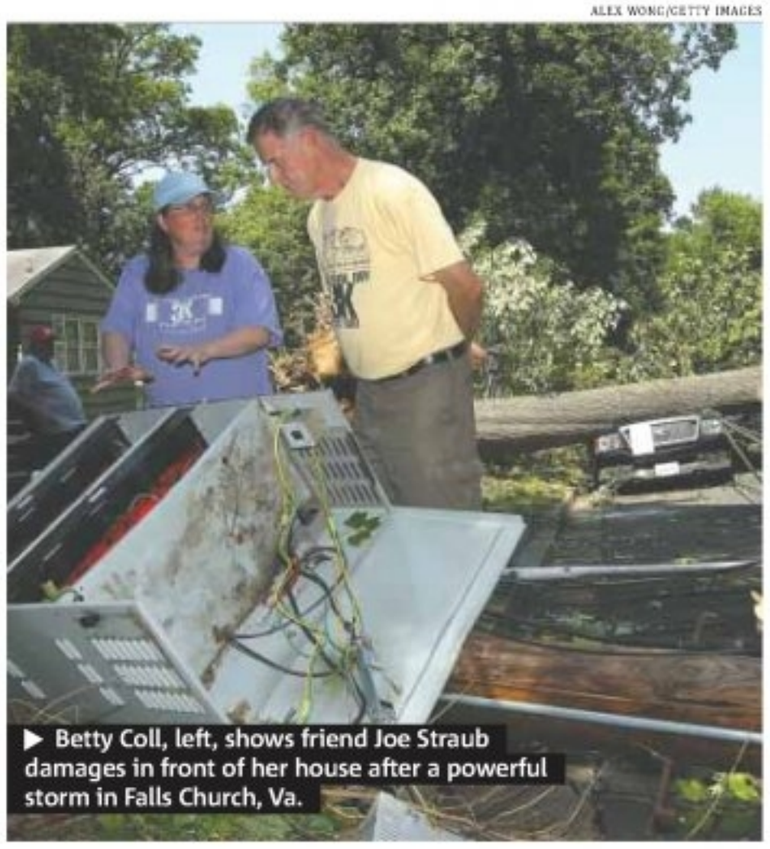
WASHINGTON. The White House praised the European Union for prohibiting Iranian crude oil imports into the 27-nation-bloc yesterday and said Tehran had an opportunity in talks this week to make progress on international concerns about its nuclear program.

"The United States welcomes the European Union's prohibition of all Iranian crude oil imports and other sanctions on Iran's oil industry, which go into full effect today," White House spokesman Jay Carney said in a statement.

Carney said the EU move was an "essential part" of diplomatic efforts in dealing with Iran. **REUTERS**

Deadly heat wave bakes US; millions left without power

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES



▶ Betty Coll, left, shows friend Joe Straub damages in front of her house after a powerful storm in Falls Church, Va.

Much of the eastern United States sweltered under oppressive heat for at least the third straight day yesterday after violent storms took a dozen lives and knocked out power to more than 3 million customers.

Emergencies were declared in Maryland, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C., on Saturday because of damage from overnight storms, which unleashed hurricane-force winds across and a 500-mile stretch of the mid-Atlantic region.

Power crews worked to restore service to homes and businesses, and officials in some areas said the job could take up to a week. Utilities in Ohio, Virginia and Maryland described damage to their power grids as catastrophic. In Ohio, power outages hit two-thirds of the state with about 1 million homes and businesses left without electricity.

106°

The mercury hit 106 degrees in Atlanta on Saturday, according to Accuweather.com.

President Barack Obama authorized FEMA to coordinate all disaster relief efforts in storm-ravaged Ohio.

The storms' rampage came amid roasting temperatures that topped 100 degrees in several southern cities, including Atlanta, where the mercury hit 106 degrees. One of the hardest-hit cities was Charlotte, N.C., where the mercury hovered at about 101 degrees yesterday afternoon.

From St. Louis to Washington, the forecasts were for temperatures that could climb to more all-time records. **REUTERS**

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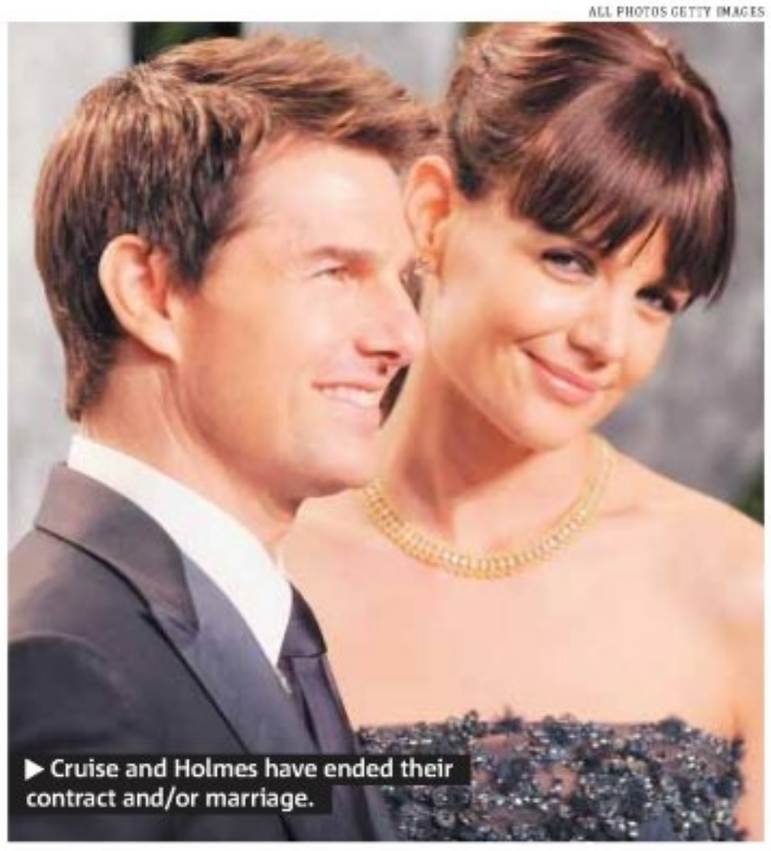
THE WORD

Metro's **Monica Weymouth** shares her take on the world of gossip @monicaatmetro monica.weymouth@metro.us

Katie Holmes gets feisty in divorce

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES



▶ Cruise and Holmes have ended their contract and/or marriage.

We all knew that when **Tom Cruise** and **Katie Holmes** got a divorce, it was going to be a weird one.

What we didn't expect was that after five years, Katie would snap out of her dead-behind-the-eyes trance with so much fight left in her.

Before filing for divorce on Thursday, the actress had already rented a separate apartment for herself in New York. Although she does occasionally live in the city, it could have been a strategic move: She's requesting sole custody of 6-year-old daughter **Suri**, which is more likely to be granted in New York than Los Angeles, where joint custody is more popular.

"Katie's primary concern remains, as it always has been, her daughter's best interest," Holmes' lawyer said in a statement Friday.

The "best interest" part is, reportedly, a reference to the Church of Scientology, which Holmes doesn't want Suri raised in. Although a high-profile member while with Cruise, Holmes is now afraid that she is considered a "threat" to the organization — similar to how **Nicole Kidman** was shunned after her divorce from Cruise in 2001 — and is being followed around New York by church authorities, reports TMZ.

Creepy? For sure. But if Scientology wants to be respected as a real religion in 2012, it's going to have to start doing much more depraved stuff than stalking Katie Holmes.

A surprise?

In statement released by his rep, Tom Cruise claims he is "deeply saddened" to learn of the filing, which happened while he was shooting on location in Iceland. And yes, while we're also hesitant to believe Cruise feels real human emotions off camera, it does seem possible that he wasn't expecting the filing: Sources tell Us Weekly that the family was recently spotted having fun at a Reykjavik restaurant.

Just last month, he was being closer to cute than couch-jumping-crazy when speaking about his wife to Playboy. "She is an extraordinary person, and if you spent five minutes with her, you'd see it," he said.

Well now, this is awkward: Tom Cruise-as-robot is one of the few sacred truths of this page. Katie, we don't have much over here — please don't take this from us.

Congrats, Adele!

Over the weekend, **Adele** announced that she is pregnant with her first baby with boyfriend **Simon Konecki**.

"I'm delighted to announce that Simon and I are expecting our first child together," the singer posted on her website. "I wanted you to hear the news direct from me. Obviously, we're over the moon and very excited."

Babies, boyfriends, No. 1 albums: How is Adele supposed to pen super-catchy songs about heartbreak when this is what she's waking up to? This lady is one puppy away from a Metro intervention.

Adele

Talking points

Brown vs. Drake continues

In the grand tradition of setting rap beefs to song, **Chris Brown** released a remix of "Game Don't Like" over the weekend addressed to **Drake**, who he feuded with in a notorious New York nightclub incident recently. The lyrics, in part., read: "One on one, what you scared bruh? / Huh, matter of fact, 'Take Care' bruh." "Take Care" is the name of Drake's second album.

Kim Kardashian: Spanx a lot

She may have one of the world's most famous figures, but **Kim Kardashian** admits that she isn't always happy with what she sees in the mirror. "I'm such a perfectionist. I don't think I'm ever really comfortable," she admits in an interview with the U.K.'s "Lorraine" show, while calling Spanx "the greatest invention."

Hart

As for dieting, she prefers to hit the gym. "I don't eat as good. I work out all the time," she says.

It's a boy ... or a girl for Hart

Melissa Joan Hart is getting ready to become a mom for the third time, but she's keeping the baby's gender a surprise. "We always wanted the mystery the other two times around, but the first time we gave into pressure from everyone and curiosity and the second time our ultrasound technician gave it away before we had a chance to stop them," she tells People.

No drinking and parenting for Snooki

Snooki plans to move in with fiance **Jionni LaValle**'s family when her baby arrives, and she's already set some house drinking rules. "Me and Jionni have made a rule: If we're hungover or if we've had two drinks, we're not going near the child," she tells Us Weekly. "We'll give him to grandma. God forbid we drop our baby!"

2

The feed ...

▶ Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

@BetteMidler: All the actors are young and getting younger. I remember when stars had glamour. And pubic hair.

@AlbertBrooks: Based on the success of Magic Mike I am now developing a 3D lap dancing movie.

@Joan_Rivers: Any moron offended by the gay pride rainbow Oreo cookie would die if they knew what the Keebler elves were doing inside the Hollow Tree.

@LadyGaga: Anyone hear the sigh of relief emitted by popstars worldwide when Adele announced her pregnancy? #ThatsTheTruthTea Congratulations gorgeous!

@SteveMartinToGo: Almost tweeted a joke, but can't. Still finding nothing funny after delight has left the world. Nora Ephron.

@Questlove: Worst feelin ever: do a 2 hr show/2 hr dj gig. drippin wet. get back to hotel to discover @Delta has yet to deliver my lost luggage.

Party rockers, reckless bikers, smiling grooms in the house

1 **Will Arnett** can ignore all of the bicycle safety codes he wants, as long as he keeps looking as cute as he was when he was leaving Whole Foods in New York City on Thursday. But seriously, Will, if you can't hear a horn beeping with those ear buds in, you might hurt that pretty little non-helmet-wearing head of yours. Take care, Gob Bluth!

2 Loud colors, inflatable zebras, Shufflebot and the party rocking combo of **Redfoo** and **SkyBlu** can only mean one thing. It's **LMFAO** in concert. They performed at the Wells Fargo Center in Philly on Friday.

3 When does **Adam Levine** sleep, and how does he look like an entirely different person when he wears glasses? On Friday, the Maroon 5 singer and **Keira Knightley** filmed scenes for the upcoming movie "Can a Song Save Your Life?" in New York City.

4 No it was not opposite day on Saturday: **Alec Baldwin** was just a little more courteous to photographers than he has been in recent history. This may have had something to do with the fact that he was on his way into St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York City, where he wed yoga instructor **Hilaria Thomas**. Also spotted walking into the ceremony were **Tina Fey**, **Woody Allen** and **Mariska Hargitay**.

5 On Thursday, members of the Guinness Book of World Records awarded **Wayne Coyne** and the Flaming Lips a certificate for breaking a record set by **Jay-Z** for the most consecutive live concerts in multiple cities within 24 hours. The new record is now eight cities in 24 hours.

6 From left, **Rocsi Diaz**, **Eddie Murphy**, **Cedric The Entertainer** and **Spike Lee** attended **Debra Lee**'s Pre-BET Awards Celebration in Los Angeles on Saturday night.

7 **Katy Perry** took a few selfies for fans at the Australian premiere of her "Part of Me" movie on Saturday night.

1, 3: JOSIAH KAMAU/BUZZFOTO/GETTY IMAGES
2: GILBERT CARRASQUILLO/GETTY IMAGES
4: ROB KIM/GETTY IMAGES
5: RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES
6: CHRISTOPHER POLK/GETTY IMAGES
7: RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES

Up close and very personal with actor Alex Pettyfer

The 'Magic Mike' star on taking it off, wardrobe malfunctions and some very enthusiastic extras

WARNER BROS.

▶ Alex Pettyfer, left, and Matthew McConaughey hit the gym before the stage in "Magic Mike."

Audiences are already familiar with Alex Pettyfer after a busy year in 2011 — he appeared in "I Am Number Four," "Beastly" and "In Time" — but they're now able to see a lot more of him, to put it lightly, with the release of "Magic Mike." Pettyfer stars as a newcomer to the world of male stripping taken under the wing of the titular Mike (Channing Tatum, who is also the inspiration for Pettyfer's character). Stripping may seem like a daunting gig, but it turns out baring all didn't bother him as much as learning to dance.

How awkward have interviews for this film been?

"The fact that you're going to dance practically naked, you kind just wrap your head around the fact that you've got to dive into it fully." PETTYFER

When you do a male stripper movie, they're going to ask you interesting questions. So you have to take everything and bite the bullet. Yes, I think the most frequently asked question is biggest wardrobe malfunction. And I think the biggest wardrobe malfunction that you have is that when you wear a thong and you have screaming girls, it can accidentally fly off. Thank God that didn't happen to me. It was during Matthew [McConaughey's] dance. It was kind of very funny.

Once you've signed up for a role like this, clearly you know what you're in for. But how do you mentally psych yourself up for it?

It's a very scary thought — one, to dance, as I've never danced before, and two, the fact that you're going to dance practically naked. You kind of just wrap your head around the fact that you've got to dive into it fully. And the fact that all the other guys are in the same boat as us, doing the same thing and — apart from Channing — not

Q&A

So what would you say was your least favorite dance routine costume?

I mean, my favorite was my least favorite because it was the hardest thing to get off. I just wanted to get it off and go for it, which is kind of funny because the first time I stripped, I wanted to keep all my clothes on. But that's a character choice and how my character is. He eventually loves what he does. So I guess the cowboy outfit? But it was also my favorite.

having the experience beforehand and having the experiences firsthand on the set, was also very calming.

You're not playing Channing Tatum per se, but he is the basis for your character. Having him must be ...

A little awkward. [Laughs] It's a little awkward, yeah, because obviously he's a phenomenal dancer, for one, and you can't compete with that. And he's lived this life. But it actually really helped me, personally, because the awkwardness and vulnerability of not having experienced what goes on in this world was actually what my character had to experience.

You also had some enthusiastic extras on set for the dances.

They were phenomenal. I wouldn't really call them actresses because I think they were very, very glad to be there. On most film sets with background, you have to be like, "Give more!" And with these guys, for 12 hours straight they were screaming. It just gave us the best energy. They did get out of hand. They got out of hand with Channing, and they 100 percent got out of hand with Matthew, because that was not planned [when they rush the stage during his dance]. I thankfully didn't have any run-ins with them.

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LIZ PHAIR WRITES SOUND TRACKS

Alt-rock queen on doing her first movie gig
She says musicians aren't quite 'People Like Us,' but that's what she loves about them

Liz Phair might not be used to the luxuries of promoting a major motion picture.

"Can I steal a water? I lost mine somewhere along the way," she asks, noticing a tray of drinks on a side table in a suite at the Four Seasons.

"This is so much easier than my normal life. I love this. Rock 'n' roll is, like, way worse," she confides. "If I were doing any kind of stuff gearing up for a release, it would be like phoners to death, just on and on and on."

After nearly three decades in the rock world, Phair finds herself in Hollywood for the first time, penning "Dotted Line," the closing track for Alex Kurtzman's "People Like Us." Writing for a movie was new territory for Phair — and that's just how she likes it.

"I throw myself into the deep end of the pool all the time, but it's always scary." LIZ PHAIR

"I felt like I'd stumbled into something where I was out of my depth, which is my favorite thing," she says. "I throw myself into the deep end of the pool all the time, but it's always scary."

Kurtzman approached Phair early on in the process.

"Alex called me in almost a year and half before it was finished," she says. "He said that he'd been listening to my music when he was trying to write the character of Frankie [played by Elizabeth Banks], and that my rock persona helped him get into her. And damned if he didn't hit every one of my issues in the film."

Phair says seeing an earlier version of the movie at a Dreamworks screening room was a monumental event.

"I bawled my eyes out in a dark room with these two men who were completely unmoved — they were like, 'We should start this shot sooner,'" she says. "Not like kind of weeping at the end of a nice movie, I mean like wracking sobs. And I'm repressing like you would a cough in the opera. I was terrified when they turned the lights on because I was out of tissues, and they were going to turn around and be like, 'What the f— happened to her?'"

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JESSE GRANT/GETTY IMAGES

▶ "What th f— happened to her?" Liz Phair rocks the red carpet.

Beautiful and broken

"People Like Us" follows two adults (Banks and Chris Pine) as they discover that they are half-siblings after their father, a successful rock producer, passes away. And that character, who looms over the story without actually being in it, is a familiar one to Phair.

"There are so many broken people in music, but they're doing something beautiful with that brokenness," she says. "Sometimes my life is so straight and clean that I like that I'm part of that tribe and I get to go and dip in and be bad and dirty. Sometimes I take a lot of pride in that, but I think at the essence you're dealing with artists. I mean, I wonder what the life expectancy is for musicians. I'd like to put it against cops and firemen. People die, it's not a joke to a lot of people. And I think to make a song out of your pain or to do something like that, it's kind of noble. Music is littered with broken people, but who isn't slightly broken? And not everyone makes something out of it."

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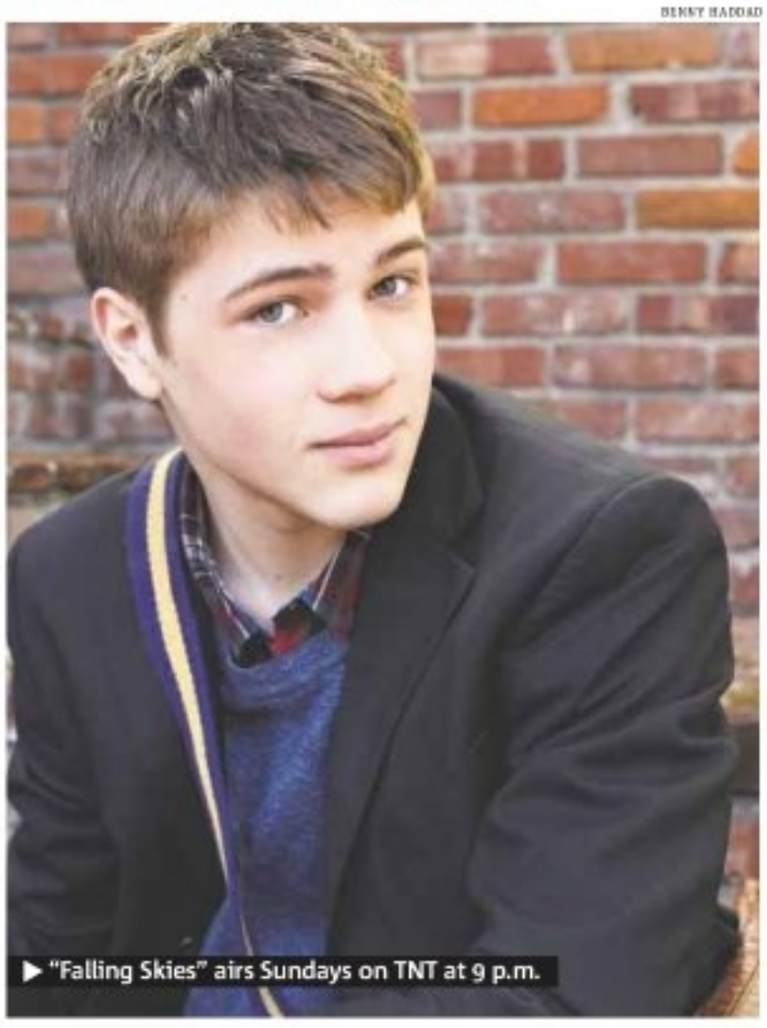
'PUBERTY ON STEROIDS'

Actor Connor Jessup, fresh out of high school, explains the evolution of his character in the new season of 'Falling Skies'

BENNY HADDAD



▶ "Falling Skies" airs Sundays on TNT at 9 p.m.

This summer is a big one for Canadian actor Connor Jessup, to put it lightly. First off, he just finished high school and turned 18.

On top of all that, Jessup gets to celebrate the second season premiere of TNT's science-fiction series "Falling Skies," in which his character, Ben Mason, plays a much bigger role than in the first season.

It must be stressful trying to juggle promoting a TV show and finishing high school.

Yeah. It's less stressful than trying to juggle shooting the show and finishing high school, which was basically impossible to do. So now I'm suffering for the time I spent shooting, trying to catch up with everything.

Your character, Ben, gets to do a lot more on the show this year.

Last season, Ben was the guy who stayed back and didn't go out on any fights. He was more passive, more bookish. He was less involved in the actual action of the show. Between seasons one and two, there's a time gap of three months, and in that time he's become a fighter. He's become much more aggressive. He's become very angry because he thinks his dad is gone and probably dead, he's lost a lot of people in these various battles. He's become much colder and more distant. When the season takes off, he's fighting. He's very angry at the aliens, but a lot of that anger is a manifestation of his own fear and confusion. I like to describe it as puberty on steroids — he doesn't know what's happening to him, there's a lot happening to his body, to his emotions, and he's trying to deal with them through angst and violence and aggressiveness. But also this season Ben plays a much more central role in the mystery of the show.

What was your reaction when you heard how much more you'd have to do?

It happened in stages. We found out that the show was getting picked up for a second season in July, almost a few weeks after it aired, but I didn't hear anything after that about what the season was about, about what was happening, until September, which was only three or four weeks before we started shooting. So it's mid-September and I get a phone call from one of our executive producers and directors, Greg Beeman. I love him a lot, but he has a very succinct way of talking. He gets right to the point. He just said, "You're going to be an action hero. Buff up" and hung up, pretty much.

Fully armed

Aside from a lot of time in the gym, you had to do some weapons training as well.

Last year, I was always very envious of the other cast members with their AK-47s and their pistols and grenade launchers and all those things. I was always hoping that I could use one. I always thought that it was a distant possibility, but sure enough my character, beyond just using one, always has one now. ... You get to pick your weapon in the show, so the guns end up reflecting the characters.

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LL Cool J wants you to make music together

The rap mogul debuts new Google Docs-meets-Pro Tools software that allows artists to connect and compose music from anywhere in the world He'll be giving it a pro test run

LL Cool J's dream came to fruition last month with the release of his new software, Future Sounds My Connect Studio, a Google Docs-meets-Pro Tools software that allows any two artists in the world to create professional-quality tracks together live.

The rapper said at the software's introductory press conference that he wanted to use the Internet to break down the walls that had previously made recording music difficult. Traditional studios, he said, cost too much time and money, and digital collaboration was limited to unwieldy back-and-forth e-mails between him and his producer.

"I want to connect musicians everywhere so there's no limitations, there's no barriers to them connecting with each other," LL Cool J said.

My Connect Studio comes from Boomdizzle, a social media site where musicians can collaborate, rate each other's music and publish tracks to iTunes, which LL Cool J co-founded in 2008. Sony then integrated My Connect Studio as part of its VAIO E14P laptop. The software also interacts with Facebook and uses Microsoft Cloud hosting.

Would the rapper have used My Connect Studio as an up-and-coming artist? "There's no way I would let this opportunity pass me by," he told Metro. "I'd use it for everything it had and try to make the best music I can make, let the chips fall where they may after that."

However, My Connect Studio is not without its limits. Currently, the software is PC-exclusive and only available through Sony's VAIO laptop, although LL Cool J said that a Mac version of the software was in the making, as well as mobile and tablet forms. Only two artists can collaborate at a time, but project engineers are working to enable more people to work together live.

KILLIAN YOUNG
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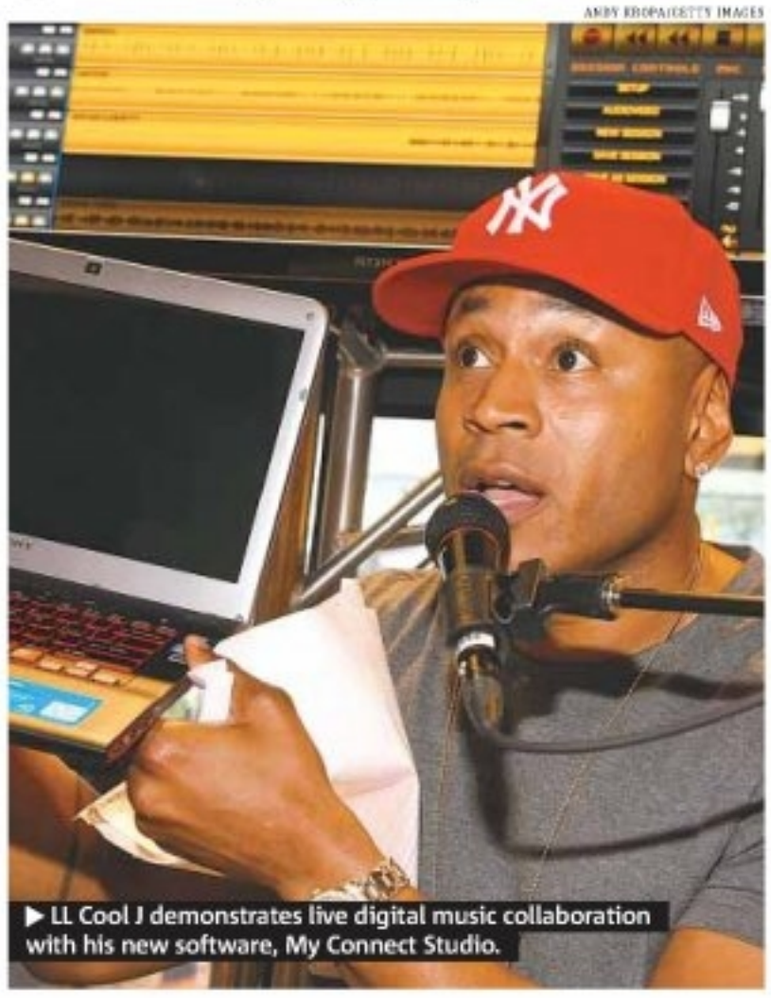
ANDY KROPA/GETTY IMAGES



▶ LL Cool J demonstrates live digital music collaboration with his new software, My Connect Studio.

A new album?

LL Cool J also coyly revealed that he's been working on a new album, some of which will be recorded using My Connect Studio.

"I'm gonna do a little bit of the album on the 'Studio' and make sure that it's official," he said with a smile. "As a matter of fact, I started on my album, too. It's authentic hip-hop. It's the business."

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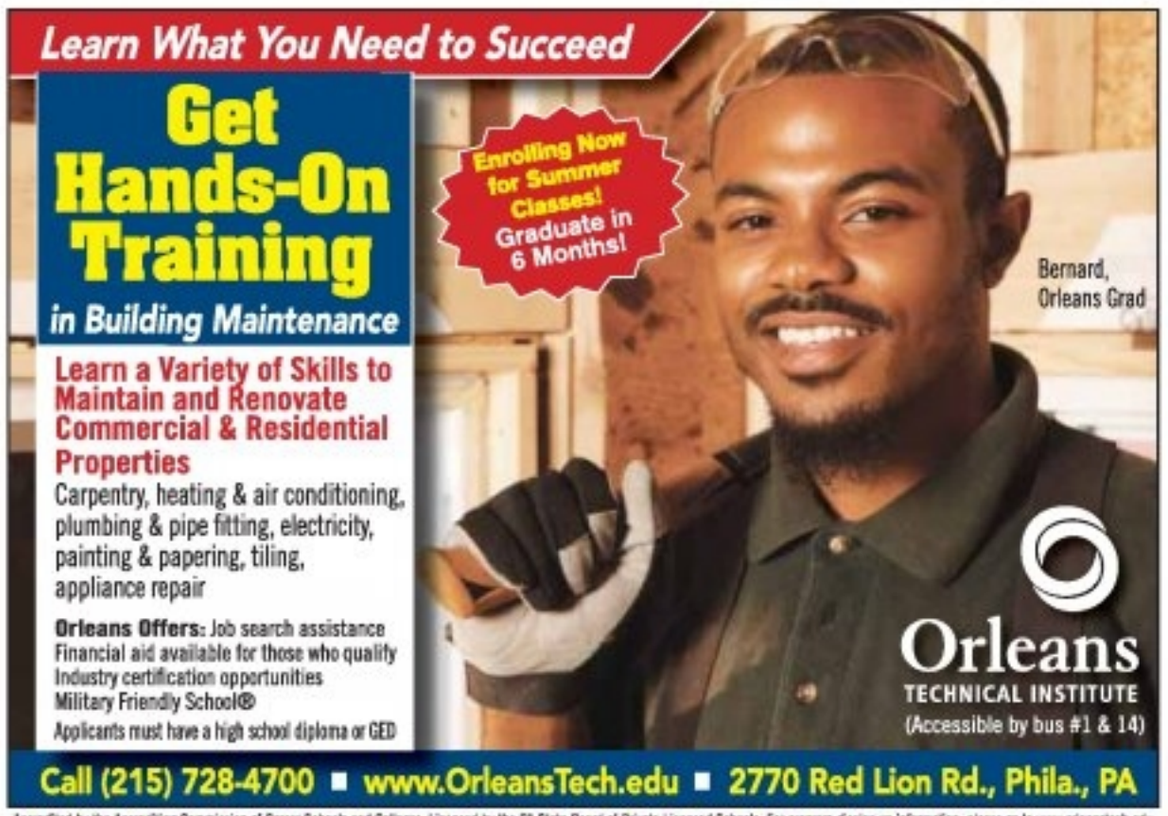
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Foul-mouthed teddy bear outperforms male strippers at box office

"Ted," an R-rated comedy featuring a foul-mouthed teddy bear, unseated Pixar's "Brave" as the top film in the U.S. and Canada this weekend with $54.1 million in sales for Universal Pictures.

"Magic Mike," about the world of male strippers, was second in its debut with $39.2 million in sales for Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Bros., researcher Hollywood.com Box-Office said yesterday.

"Ted," which was made for about $50 million and stars Mark Wahlberg, beat out three other new releases including "Tyler Perry's Madea's Witness Protection."

"A film about a cute teddy bear that is not for children is a risky bet, but they pulled it off as the film definitely came in above expectations," says Paul Sweeney, a media and entertainment analyst for Bloomberg Industries. "The success of R-rated films this week shows there is still demand for films for adults despite the bevy of summer action films and children's movies."

UNIVERSAL PICTURES/ILOURA

▶ "Ted"

In "Ted," Wahlberg plays a man whose teddy bear comes to life as a result of a childhood wish. He must choose whether to stay with his girlfriend or keep his friendship with the bawdy teddy bear. Mila Kunis co-stars in the picture, which was directed by Seth MacFarlane, the creater of the "Family Guy" television series.

Warner Bros.' male-stripper movie "Magic Mike," also R-rated, features Channing Tatum in the title role. An experienced stripper, Mike teaches a young performer named "The Kid" how to party, pick up women and make easy money. Matthew McConaughey, Alex Pettyfer and Olivia Munn co-star. The picture was made for about $7 million, according to Box Office Mojo.

"Brave," from Disney's Pixar studio, finished in third place with $34 million, falling 49 percent from last weekend, when it opened up at No. 1. The film tells the story of the rebellious princess Merida, who prefers riding horses and archery to the more sedentary palace duties of a princess.

BLOOMBERG

TV watch list

'Web Therapy'

COMEDY. The ridiculous, utterly unhelpful, completely hilarious therapy sessions provided by Internet shrink Fiona (Lisa Kudrow) have proven so effective — at least on a comedy level — that even Meryl Streep has signed up. The Oscar-winner appears in Season 2 as a gay-conversion therapist working with Fiona's husband (Victor Garber). **Season premiere, 11 p.m. Showtime**

'America's Got Talent'

REALITY. In the first live episode this season, the final 12 acts perform for your texting approval. **9 p.m., NBC**

'Four Houses'

REALITY. Four homeowners with a flair for interior design open their houses and get catty rating each other's homes for originality, style and livability — all in the name of winning a $10,000 prize and an opportunity to be featured in Better Homes and Gardens magazine. **Series premiere, 10 p.m., TLC** ● AMBER RAY

▶ Lisa Kudrow, left, stars as Fiona Wallice, and Meryl Streep guest stars as Camilla Bowner on "Web Therapy."

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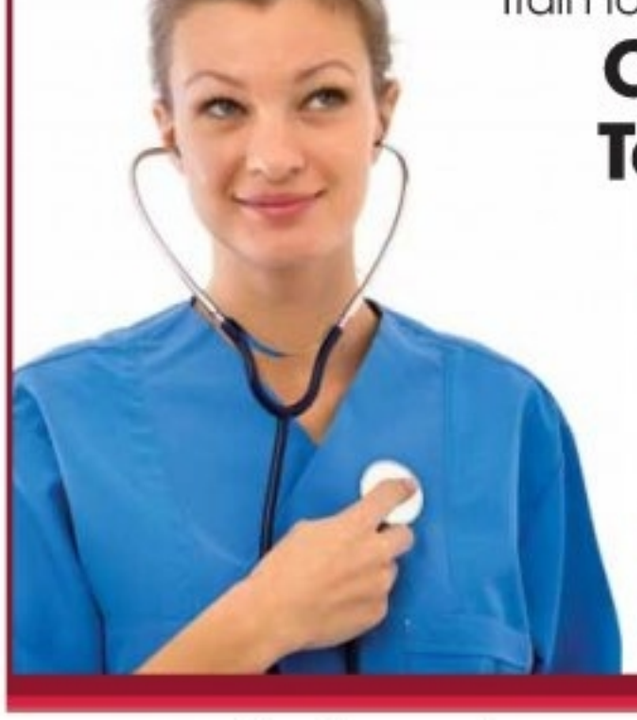

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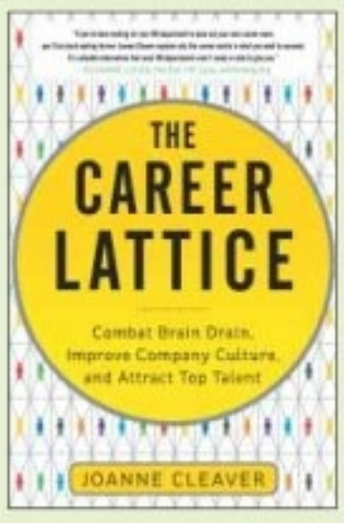
Interview

Growing on the 'Career Lattice'



In 2004, Joanne Cleaver was the deputy business editor at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and envisioned herself staying there for years. However, Cleaver was laid off when the industry declined. But her unorthodox career path and entrepreneurial approach allowed her to bounce back. Her new book — "The Career Lattice: Combat Brain Drain, Improve Company Culture, and Attract Top Talent" — was released last month.

Why is the traditional career ladder collapsing?
We've seen a shift toward team structures in organizations. Companies will have a team devoted to a project, and that team will disperse and reform for another project. Also, during the recession many organizations eliminated entire layers of management, so each rung of the ladder has become much steeper in many cases — and more incapable of developing talent.

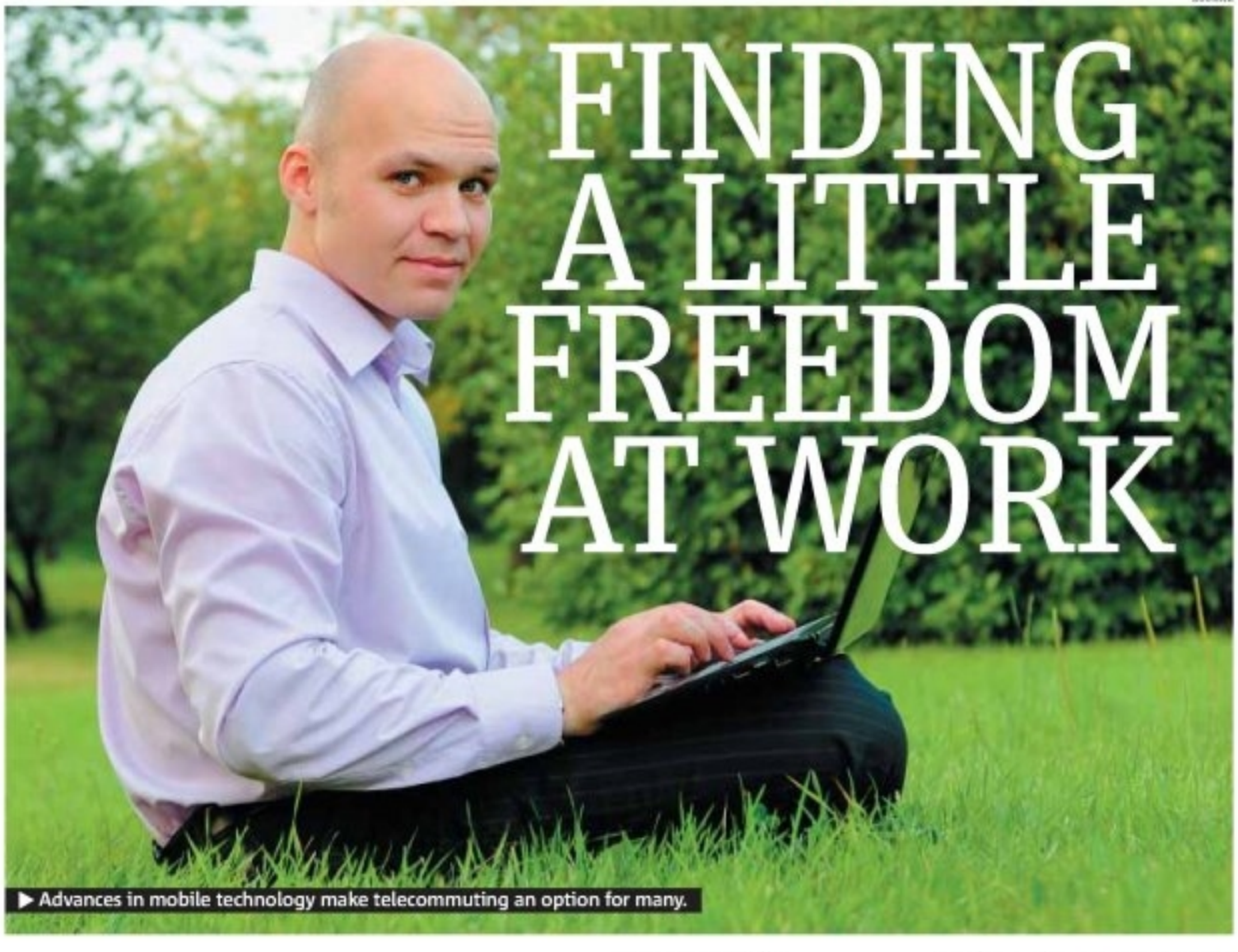
Is there a silver lining in any of this?
Now we know we're on our own, and there's a certain freedom in that. The "Lattice" provides structure for channeling the ambition that you have. You don't have to rely on what your human resources department tells you. You don't have to follow in anyone's footsteps or flounder around accumulating certifications that lead nowhere.

What's the first step in designing a "Career Lattice"?
First, you have to inventory your skills. Your job description describes what you need to do to accomplish your job at your organization. But you bring more than that. You have skills and aptitudes that could shape the acquisition of a new skill. So you need a 360-degree inventory of everything you bring to your career. Then you can begin to mix and match your technical skills, experience and natural talents to position yourself for a lateral move. And the more lateral moves you make, the more pieces of your skill set will be validated.

BRUCE WALSH

On July Fourth, most of us will have a day off to celebrate our freedom — usually with fireworks and hot dogs But what about your freedom back at the office? We found out how we can spend less time chained to our desks and more time flexing our creative muscles

ZOONAR



FINDING A LITTLE FREEDOM AT WORK

▶ Advances in mobile technology make telecommuting an option for many.

Get flexible

"Flexibility is freedom," declares Allison O'Kelly, founder/CEO of Mom Corps. She suggests learning your company's specific options for flexible schedules before approaching your boss. "Check with your human resources department before speaking with your manager, to see if there is a flexible work plan in place. Before diving in headlong, educate yourself on the mutual benefits of flexible work options and be prepared to do the same for your manager."

Telecommute

Heather R. Huhman, founder and president of Come Recommended, is a firm believer in telecommuting. "Many employees are beginning to telecommute to improve their work-life balance," says Huhman. "Many jobs require work that can be completed from home, so talk to your boss about testing out telecommuting for a day or two. If you check in regularly via Skype, e-mail or phone and complete all tasks on time, both the employer and the employee will benefit from the increased freedom telecommuting provides." Bonus: You can wear your American flag PJs all day.

Give the best performance

It's no surprise that top performers are given the most leeway. "If you are exceeding the current standards for your job and contributing to your boss's goals, then you can often ask for and receive more autonomy, because you have built a reserve of trust from your manager," explains retired clinical professor John Millikin. "The more your manager sees that he or she does not need to manage you closely, the more freedom will be allowed."

JULIA WEST
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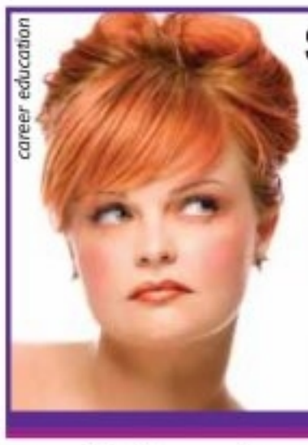

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mywellbeing

How to go about finding a therapist

- Metro's newest advice columnist is here with help
- Therapists are unlikely to be fazed by what they hear

I'd like to start seeing a therapist. How do I choose someone? I'm a little nervous to tell all my secrets to a stranger.

Finding the right therapist is a bit like dating — with a few exceptions, as you can imagine.

I'm not recommending skipping from therapy couch to couch until you find the perfect match. But unless the professional sitting before you gives you the willies, I would suggest giving him or her at least three visits to see if your comfort level increases. But even comfort can be a tricky thing; if your new therapist reminds you of the mother you hate, it could be a good match — she might help you access and work through the thoughts and feelings about your mother that always trip you up in relationships.

What happens in the room between client and therapist is often a reflection of what happens outside the room between clients and their significant relationships. Consequently, a good healing relationship with a therapist can be a powerful thing. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

No insurance necessary

KIM SCHNEIDERMAN, MSW, LCSW

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Here are some basic considerations:

1 Make sure the therapist has the appropriate mental health license, which varies from state to state. This includes Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) or Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). He or she might have a Ph.D. or PsyD in Psychology.

2 While it's generally not a good idea to see the same therapist as a relative (unless it's a family therapist), it helps to get referrals from trustworthy sources such as friends, colleagues or organizations that train therapists. If you want to use your insurance, there are also several online sites (e.g. Psychology Today) that match you with therapists who take your insurance.

3 Inquire about treatment approaches and specializations. Most therapists can treat depression, anxiety, self-esteem or relationship issues. But if you need help with a cocaine addiction, go to a treatment center or find someone who is a credentialed alcoholism and substance abuse counselor. If you have obsessive-compulsive disorder, make sure your therapist has experience treating OCD. A little research can go a long way.

– Kim Schneiderman, MSW, LCSW, is a psychotherapist and former journalist with a private practice in New York City. She is currently working on her first book, "How to Be the Star of Your Own Story: Writing the Path to Personal Transformation," based on the therapeutic writing workshops she's taught at the 92nd Street Y and JCC in Manhattan. E-mail her your questions at askkim@metro.us.

Metro does not endorse the opinions of the author, or any opinions expressed on its pages.

GOODSHOOT

▶ An initial phone consultation with your potential therapist can ensure you're on the same page about treatment options.

Your secret's safe

Now, about your other concern: Telling your secrets to a stranger can be quite liberating, especially when that stranger is a trained professional who is legally obligated to keep them. Seasoned therapists are rarely flustered by what they hear. Often privy to both the darkest and brightest corners of the human heart, we recognize that people are dynamic, multi-faceted creatures who wear many masks. We take confidentiality very seriously, but there are a few exceptions:

- With written consent, we can share specific information with medical professionals, insurance companies and anyone else you designate.
- We are legally required to report suspected cases of child physical and sexual abuse, past and present (the past is required in case the abuser still has access to children).
- We are legally required to report serious potential threats to harming yourself or another person, especially if you have a plan and/or a weapon.
- We can seek consultation from other mental health professionals, who are also legally obligated to keep this info confidential. In such cases, the therapist will keep your identity anonymous.

And here's a secret about therapists: We have problems too. If anything, being aware of our humanity makes us all the more compassionate.

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Letters

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Sounding off on health care

We are getting no help from the television newscasters in understanding what the Obamacare issue is all about. First, it is not the president's job to create laws. Second, the "law" is unconstitutional in that it is not the job of government to be involved with health care. Practically everything the government in Washington touches is made worse: public education, government spending, wars, housing, just to name a few. Health care should be locally controlled or be influenced by state governments not the federal government. And one more thing, Romney says he will "reform" the health care law. What a phoney conservative! He should be seeking to abolish the monstrosity not reform it. **FRANK ST. GEORGE, VIA E-MAIL**

The Affordable Care Act frees an employee from "job lock," the reluctance to voluntarily terminate employment for fear of losing health care benefits, particularly if one has a pre-existing condition. Now, it will take more than company health insurance to hold a valuable, experienced employee who should be better paid or better treated. **GLENN HAYES, VIA E-MAIL**

Romney says that if elected he would repeal "the debacle that is Obamacare." In supreme court justice Roberts' decision on the affordable health care act he states that the blueprint for "Obamacare" was laid out by the former governor of Massachusetts. Mitt Romney! Hypocrisy thy name is Republican. **ROBERT LA ROSA, VIA E-MAIL**

The Supreme Court ruled that Obamacare is Constitutional. But is it the right call? As a nation, we are in a sluggish economy and millions of people are out of work. In my opinion, if you force small businesses to insure all their employees, they will not look to expand or hire more workers. In addition to that, if you force those who cannot afford insurance to buy it, even at a reduced rate you create a hardship. A person might be forced to make a choice between housing and food to pay for insurance. That, in my view, is just not the right way to go. **FREDERICK R. BEDELL JR., VIA E-MAIL**

E-mail your letters: **letters@metro.us**

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words.
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Re: 'Flags are for flying, not wearing'

I disagree on one point. The flag is a sacred piece of our national history, but that does not stop people from other countries from proudly displaying their country's colors in whatever garments or accessories they choose, because that is the very nature of America, freedom of expression. So if one chooses to wear the red, white and blue, then what's the harm? One can wear the colors of the flag, but not the flag itself; and, if you so choose, at least make sure that it's made in America! **ANTHONY VASSER, VIA E-MAIL**

Our soldiers wear U.S. flag patches on their shoulders as part of their uniform. This has been a long-standing tradition, and it was declared mandatory in 2004, with allowances for camouflage. Are we therefore to say that the U.S. military uniform is unpatriotic? **DANIEL KING, VIA E-MAIL**

Horoscope

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** There's a strong chance you might have to deal with someone whom you feel wronged you in the past, but this isn't an opportunity for payback.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** Be extremely selective to whom you turn for counsel if you find yourself in need of financial advice. Go only to someone who has had a lot of success in dealing with money matters.

♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** You know how awful you felt in the past when someone treated you in a deceitful manner, so don't do anything that would cause you to be accused of this type of behavior.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** You're likely to be quite imaginative, which is all well and good, as long as you don't view life's developments more negatively than positively.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** If you find yourself feeling a trifle envious or jealous of a close friend, make that energy into a motivator, no matter how painful it is to do so.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** You could get everyone frustrated with you if you vacillate too much on an important issue and fail to take a stance. In order to command respect, be decisive.

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** Usually you have a great understanding of life, and allow for the frailties in others. Today, however, you're likely to be hypercritical and do nothing but find fault with everyone. Loosen up.

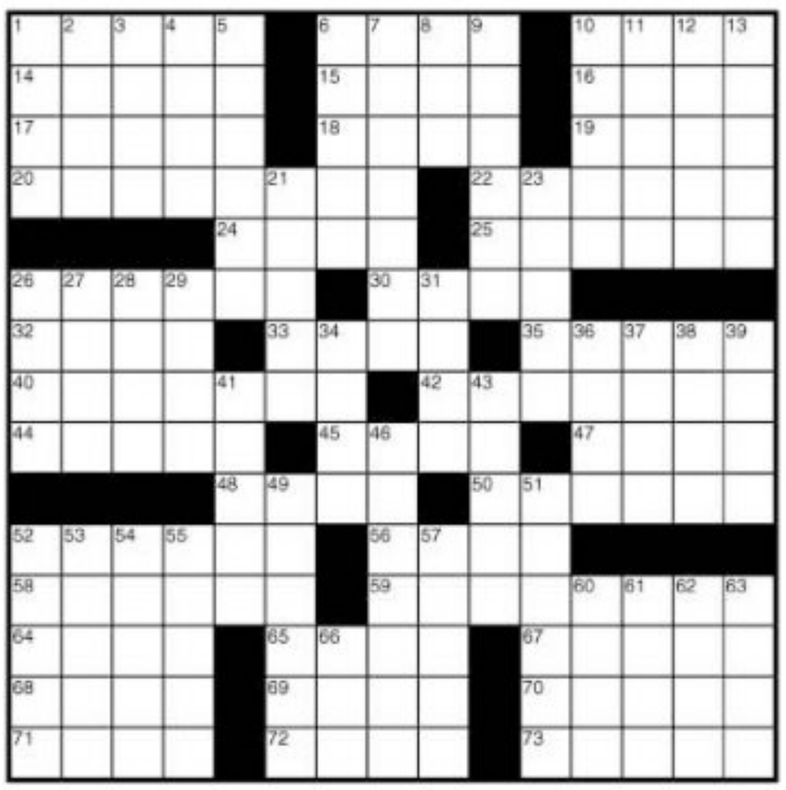
♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** Although it's not normal, you could be far too gullible and impulsively involve yourself in something that's way over your head, motivated purely by wishful thinking. Keep your feet on the ground.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** The major reason you and your mate could end up in opposition is likely because neither one of you is able to effectively articulate your true feelings.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** When working with unfamiliar materials or tools, you had better make it a point to keep your concentration from wandering. Too many bad things could happen if you don't.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** Although it's not normal for you, you're not beyond taking a calculated risk when you think the circumstances call for it. Just make sure what you do is well thought out in advance.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** Don't be surprised if people emulate the example you set, especially if you're abrasive and difficult to get along with. Others usually give back what we give out, one way or another. **BERNICE BEDE OSOL**



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64 Cisterns
65 Neaten the hedge
67 Pyle or Kovacs
68 Send forth
69 Hideous monster
70 Scope
71 Frilly
72 Not e'en once
73 Golfer Sam _

Down
1 Blue ox of legend
2 "Woe is me!"
3 Kind of jockey
4 _ _ grip!
5 Verve
6 Fiji neighbor
7 "Song of Myself" poet
8 Shuttle's destination
9 Tickles
10 Little kid
11 Flood barrier
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26 Summits
27 "_ _ Her Standing There"
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36 Noted limerick maker
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38 Tulsa's st.
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41 Clunks
43 Claw
46 Start without a key (hyph.)
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51 Snakes you can count on?
52 Carpentry joint
53 Andes ruminant
54 Eye nerve
55 Odious
57 Sweeter and juicier
60 Kind of muffin
61 Queen _'s lace
62 Prefix with "byte"
63 Nut, actually
66 Size above med.

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			2				7	6

SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

		3	4		9		1	
	5							6
1			8	2			9	
7							5	2
	1	2				6	3	
5	3							1
	9			4	8			5
4							7	
	2		3		1	8		

SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS: WWW.METRO.US/PUZZLES

Solution to the weekend crossword

Z	O	N	E	S	■	R	I	V	A	L	■	E	C	O
A	B	A	T	E	■	A	D	A	G	E	■	W	O	K
P	I	P	E	D	■	M	E	T	O	O	■	E	R	A
■	■	■	U	M	P	S	■	■	P	O	R	G	Y	■
A	L	P	A	C	A	S	■	C	H	A	S	S	I	S
M	A	R	R	E	D	■	P	E	A	R	L	■	■	■
M	U	O	N	S	■	P	U	L	L	D	O	W	N	■
O	R	O	■	■	R	U	N	T	S	■	■	H	I	S
■	A	F	F	L	I	C	T	S	■	P	A	I	N	S
■	■	■	R	O	C	K	S	■	H	O	R	N	E	T
G	A	R	A	G	E	S	■	C	O	N	F	E	S	S
A	M	E	N	S	■	■	P	A	N	T	■	■	■	■
M	I	D	■	O	W	N	E	R	■	O	A	S	E	S
E	N	D	■	F	O	I	S	T	■	O	P	R	A	H
R	O	Y	■	F	E	L	T	S	■	N	O	I	R	E

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music&style

Before fireworks go up, plenty goes down

Thanks to the Roots Jam, there's no shortage of music headed this way
Don't wait until Wednesday to tune in We check in with Ground Up

The Roots' 4th of July Jam culminates with Wednesday's concert on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway with Queen Latifah, Daryl Hall, Common, Joe Jonas and, of course, hometown heroes The Roots. But first up, local rap trio Ground Up performs at the TLA with the Brooklyn rapper Talib Kweli as an appetizer of sorts.

The three 22-years olds — gravel-throated MC Alexander Azar, smooth-tongued MC Malcolm McDowell and producer Bijan Houshmadinajad (aka Bij Lincs) — came together in 2008, when Azar and McDowell began studying at Temple University. (Azar is still working on his degree, and Bij Lincs graduated from The Art Institute Of Philadelphia.) They've since transformed a house in North Philadelphia into Ground Up's headquarters.

"The house is like a factory," says Azar. "The beats are made upstairs, Malcolm and I have rooms where we write, our manager lives here, our merchandise director lives in the basement, and our videographers also lives with us. Everyone's always busy. We're like the Brady Bunch over here — like a family of best friends."

"It has become more of a lifestyle than a job for us," adds McDowell. "The work never really stops."

Ground Up's work ethic is relentless. In less than four years, they've released 10 free mixtapes — most recently, the DJ Damage-hosted "The Get Up"— and the eleventh, "Supernatural," drops in September. They've also self-produced dozens of videos, organized national and international tour dates and launched Ground Up Sounds LLC. They pride themselves on doing it all without support from a record label. "We figured it out as we went along," says Azar. "There's no manual for this, so we wrote our own. We've been self-sustaining for so long, and have proved that we're capable of doing all the things a label could do for us for ourselves. We're gonna remain independent for as long as it feels right."

ELLIOTT SHARP
letters@metro.us

GROUND UP

▶ Ground Up play the TLA tomorrow night as part of the Roots Jam.

If you go

The Roots' 4th of July Jam featuring Talib Kweli, Ground Up and Khemist
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Quoted

"Everyone's always busy. We're like the Brady Bunch over here — like a family of best friends."
ALEXANDER AZAR

What we're into

Something blue

No offense to red and white, but we've got the blues this July Fourth.

1. Nicole Richie's jewelry and accessories line, House of Harlow, has a vintage West Coast wink. We don't want to let go of this leather clutch and sweet bangle. **$225 (bag) and $80 (bracelet), www.houseofharlow1960.com**

2. We didn't completely forget you, boys: Made in New York City, The Hill-Side's gingham pocket square has major picnic potential. **$44, www.artintheage.com**

3. Booty text should be used sparingly — and only on very special occasions. These cheeky briefs from Victoria's Secret fit the bill. **$10, www.victoriassecret.com**

4. Baby, you're a firework. Oversized polka dots lend Boden's retro bikini top a little all-American bombshell appeal. **$26, www.bodenusa.com**
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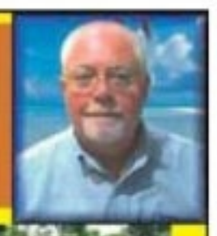

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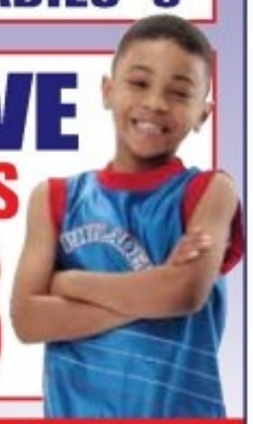

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Phillies in uncharted waters now

Will team be buyers or sellers at trading deadline? Thome's exit raises questions Phils swept by Fish

The Phillies haven't been here in awhile. Five straight division crowns will do that.

But after another crushing loss — a 5-2 defeat yesterday in Miami — the Phils are nine games under .500 halfway through the baseball season. They are 11 games behind Washington for first place in the NL East through 81 games. And, after trading Jim Thome to Baltimore Saturday afternoon, some are thinking that the Phillies might be sellers when MLB's trading deadline rolls around at the end of July.

GETTY IMAGES

Thome

There was even a Twitter report floating around that the Phils were actively shopping free-agent-to-be Cole Hamels. The left-hander took the loss in a 3-2 heartbreaker Saturday afternoon. Cliff Lee's struggles continued, too, as he headed to the showers early Friday in a 6-2 defeat. (They lost all three games in Miami.)

"When we can't win with Lee and Hamels, that kind of tells you how things have gone," manager Charlie Manuel said over the weekend. "We're trying to turn it around, of course, and get something going. We can get so close, yet we drift right back and get so far away."

The Phillies are off today and will try to collect themselves before starting a three-game set with the Mets tomorrow. They'll follow that up by hosting the Braves for three games. If they can't make up any ground in the next week, it just might be time for a massive overhaul. METRO

Chooch leads All-Star picks

Carlos Ruiz, Jonathan Papelbon and Cole Hamels will represent the Phils in the Midsummer Classic.

Chooch won't be the starting catcher, but he'll be there on manager Tony LaRussa's bench. It marks the first All-Star selection for Ruiz.

Hamels will be appearing in his third All-Star game, with Papelbon heading to his fifth. The game is scheduled for July 10 in Kansas City. It will be televised on FOX starting at 7:30. METRO

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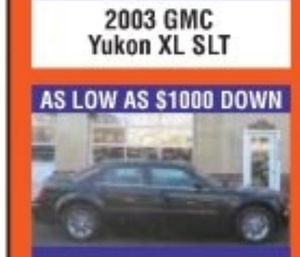
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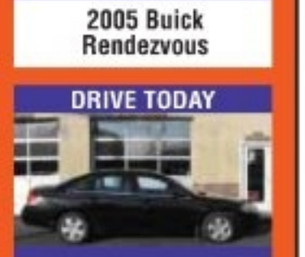
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Orange and Black make little splash

Flyers relatively quiet on first day of NHL free agency ◗ Team re-signs Leighton to one-year contract ◗ Parise, Suter reportedly on their radar

The Flyers didn't exactly make a splash on the first day of NHL free agency. However, they did take care of a need.

The Flyers re-signed backup goaltender Michael Leighton yesterday to a one-year contract worth a reported $900,000. Leighton, 31, has bounced around the minors after a stellar 2010 Stanley Cup playoff run. He set the franchise record for shutouts when he recorded three in the Eastern Conference finals.

"I'm very happy to be back in Philly," Leighton said. "This is where I want to be, and I'm excited about the team we have this year. I look forward to the opportunity to continue working with [Flyers goaltenders coach] Jeff Reese."

Leighton has appeared in 86 games over the past two seasons with the Adirondack Phantoms. He was selected to the 2012 AHL All-Star Classic. METRO

Deal with it?

So the Michael Leighton signing doesn't excite you? Well, the Flyers reportedly made offers to Zach Parise, Ryan Suter and Matt Carle.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Michael Leighton, the 2010 playoff hero, is returning to serve as Ilya Bryzgalov's backup next season in net for the Flyers.

Soccer. EuroCup

▶ Spain beat Italy 4-0 yesterday to win 2012 EuroCup.

GETTY IMAGES

More reign for Spain

Credit Spain with the Three-Peat. The country became the first European team to win three straight international tournaments after defeating Italy 4-0 yesterday in the EuroCup. David Silva, Jordi Alba, Fernando Torres and Juan Mata scored in one of the most lopsided finals in history.

Sixers quiet after draft night shocker

The Sixers shocked a lot of people when they drafted Maurice Harkless with the 15th pick. He appears to be another tweener, something the Sixers have a surplus of.

"Once we moved Evan [Turner] into the starting lineup, we didn't have another wing," coach Doug Collins said.

The coach shot down rumors about Andre Iguodala's future by calling a potential trade "nonsense." METRO

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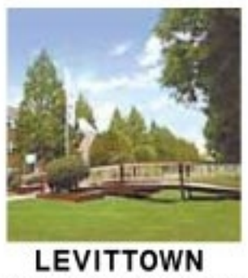

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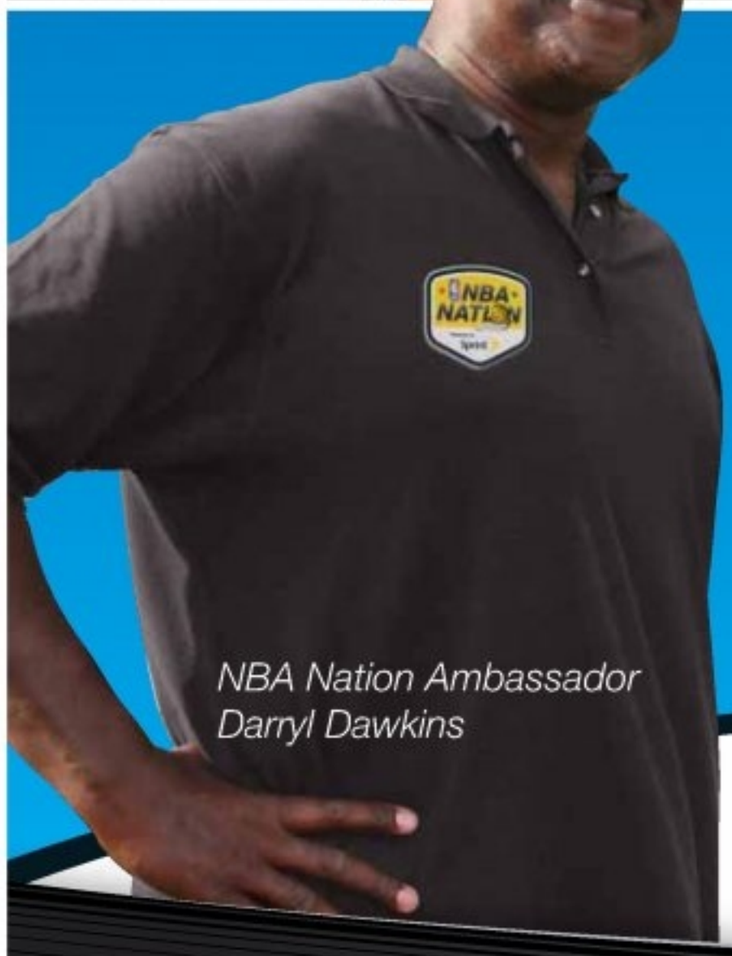

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